

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks at a Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate R. Creigh Deeds in Norfolk, Virginia

October 27, 2009

The President. Hello, Virginia! Thank you, Virginia! Well, it's good to be back in Norfolk. It's good to be back in Virginia.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. I am so proud to stand up here with two Virginia leaders, two men who wake up every single day thinking about your future, your family's future, the future of this Commonwealth, two men of great character. The only difference is one's the Governor and one's going to be the Governor: Tim Kaine and Creigh Deeds.

In addition to these outstanding leaders, there are a couple other people I just want to acknowledge. I want to say thank you to the Old Dominion University President, Brocerick—he told me your football team is doing all right; a great Member of Congress, Congressman Bobby Scott; Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones; Norfolk Mayor Paul Fraim; State Senator Yvonne Miller; Delegate Kenny Alexander; your next Lieutenant Governor, Jody Wagner; and your next attorney general, Steve Shannon. That's a good lineup. That is a good lineup.

Now, one of the things I like about Virginia is that you've got a good pattern emerging here—started with Mark Warner. He's now doing an extraordinary job as your Senator, but 8 years ago, he recognized that the old, tired, worn-out politics of division, that wasn't serving the American people well, it wasn't serving the Commonwealth of Virginia very well. He saw a lot of bickering and a lot of arguing and a lot of point-scoring, but not a whole lot of getting things done. So Mark Warner thought to himself, you know what, I'm going to try something different. Let's run a campaign that proves we're all in this together, that there is no northern Virginia or southern Virginia or coastal Virginia, there's one Commonwealth of Virginia.

And he governed in a way that wasn't ideological; it was pragmatic. He focused on what works. He made this incredible Commonwealth work not by pushing people apart, but by bringing people together. He shaped a better kind of politics right here in Virginia, and he made the long-term investments necessary to make Virginia competitive in a global economy, to chart a course to growth and success.

And then you had Tim Kaine, who built and expanded on that legacy. He invested in education so that every child in Virginia could have the tools they need to succeed in this global marketplace. He refused to be distracted by petty politics, even through tough times, even when folks were calling him names. He remained focused on his vision for Virginia's future.

Audience member. Keep your head up, President Obama!

The President. Oh, don't worry about me.

And because of the tradition that Tim Kaine established and Mark Warner established, Virginia became one of the best managed States in the country, a State that was able to make critical investments even as it was dealing with a fiscal crisis, a State that became better positioned to navigate some of the toughest economic times we've seen in this Nation's history, all because of leadership based on smart decisions and sound investments and renewed civility

to our politics. That's what a couple of Democratic Governors brought to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Now, here's the thing, Virginia: This wasn't just a stroke of good luck. These guys didn't just come out of nowhere. It's because you stood up. You chose that kind of politics. And in one week, you'll have a choice. You can decide to break that tradition of good stewardship, or you can continue with that opportunity.

You'll have the chance to elect somebody who is cut from the very same cloth as Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, somebody who listens to folks even when we don't always agree, somebody who focuses not on short-term politics, but on a practical, long-term vision, and that man is Creigh Deeds. That man is Creigh Deeds.

I said before, look, I would have liked this guy no matter what, because he's got a funny name like Barack Obama. *[Laughter]* So we've both overcome these hardships. *[Laughter]* Served in the State legislature, just like me. So me and him, we're like that.

But keep in mind, this is a man, who for more than two decades as a county prosecutor, as a delegate, as a State senator, has asked for nothing more than just to serve you. When Virginia families needed to make sure their children were safe, he wrote Megan's Law and advocated for the AMBER Alert program. When Mark Warner needed help reforming the budget and controlling spending in the midst of financial crisis, it was Creigh Deeds who he turned to. And even in the face of that crisis, they had the foresight to make record investments in education and lay a foundation for Virginia's long-term growth. When Tim Kaine needed support for a new prekindergarten program that will give Virginia's kids a better start in life, Creigh Deeds was there. Again and again, Creigh has been there for the people of Virginia, and now he needs you to be there for them. You need—he needs you to be there for him.

Now, let's just be straight here. Let's be honest. This is going to be a tough race. I mean, we've got a tough economy. And even if it wasn't a tough economy, it's always tough in Virginia. I don't remember Tim Kaine ever having an easy election. Tim, did you have an easy election? *[Laughter]* We knew this was going to be tough. But even though Virginia is moving in the right direction, this is an evenly split State, pretty independent-minded folks. And that's good, that's healthy. We are at our best when we're engaged in a great debate, where ideas are tested and assumptions are challenged. That's how we strengthen our proposals. That's how we strengthen our government.

But let me—having said all that, let me just be clear: We don't need politicians who are more interested in scoring points than solving problems. We don't need folks who are slick, or try to say one thing and then do another. We don't need politicians who say we should go back to the policies of yesteryear, when it was those very same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. We've had enough of those kind of politicians. We got a whole bunch of those in Washington, DC.

When I showed up after Inauguration, they had left a big mess on the floor. *[Laughter]* So I got a mop, and I started cleaning up their mess. That's okay, I don't mind. But you know, it does bother me when they start saying, "You're not mopping fast enough." *[Laughter]* "You're not holding the mop the right way." *[Laughter]* My attitude is, why don't you grab a mop? Right?

That's what we need, somebody who's committed to moving us forward, not worrying about politics, but doing the work on behalf of hard-working men and women, on behalf of

middle class families, on behalf of the people of Virginia. That's the kind of person Creigh Deeds is.

Creigh understands Virginia faces tough challenges, and solving them will require more than just lip service and political ads. It will require a realistic vision. When you're governing, as Tim will tell you, nothing comes free. Government comes—means you've got to prioritize. You've got to make tough choices. You can't be everything to everybody. You've got to recognize that change doesn't happen overnight.

But if we make the right decisions now, then 10, 15 years down the road, we'll look back and we'll realize we're in a much better place than we otherwise would have been. That's what happened because of the good decisions of Mark Warner and Tim Kaine. Virginia is in a better place. That's what you can expect with Creigh Deeds.

As a consequence of his choices, choices that improve transportation, that give every child a chance in life, that continue the thoughtful probusiness policies in the Warner-Kaine tradition, Virginia will keep moving down the right path. It'll keep making sure that every child in this Commonwealth has access to a world-class education that they need to compete for jobs throughout the country.

Virginia will keep moving toward a secure energy future that frees ourselves from the grip of foreign oil and creates millions of new jobs that pay well right here in America. Virginia will keep moving toward a stronger economy that works for everybody and allows people to retire with some dignity and some respect. And, yes, Virginia will keep moving toward a health system that finally makes quality insurance affordable for Americans who don't have coverage and that gives stability and security to Americans who do, policies that'll finally slow the skyrocketing costs that are crushing families and businesses and our State and Federal budgets. Opportunity in every corner of Virginia, that's what matters to Creigh Deeds. That's what he'll keep fighting for for the people of Virginia, if you give him a chance.

Now, let me say this. I know there are a lot of folks out here who, when they came out in November for my campaign, they turned out to elect Tim Kaine. But you know, these, sort of, off-year elections, you know, sometimes people say, "Well, you know, I just went last year. I was just volunteering. I was—I already did that knocking on doors." And so maybe people feel a little complacent. Maybe people feel a little cynical, because they're thinking, "Boy, we haven't changed things overnight." I know that there are folks watching who wonder whether or not their investment in their elected leaders can or will actually solve the problems they face.

And people have a right to feel frustrated. Year after year, decade after decade, some of these problems just keep on lingering, and there's still partisan gridlock, whether it's in Richmond or Washington.

But I'm here today because you've got the opportunity to elect a man who represents a better kind of politics. You know, you've got the chance to elect somebody who's got a good heart and a good head and a commitment to work hard on your behalf. And he may not be perfect. My wife reminds me I'm not; she is. Just like our spouses are perfect, but we're not. [Laughter] You know, Creigh, sometimes his tie gets a little askew, and, you know, his hair is a little—[laughter]—but here's the question is, is that what the people of Virginia are looking for?

Audience members. No!

The President. Are you looking for slick?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or are you looking for somebody who is going to be fighting for you?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you going to be looking for somebody—I hope you'll vote based on how good a Governor he is going to be for the people of Virginia. I hope you're going to be voting for the content of his character. I hope that you're going to be voting based on his track record and the fact that he's stood with families like yours for years. That's the kind of Governor that Creigh Deeds is going to be.

You know, when I was—right in the last week of our campaign, back in Iowa—it was when a lot of you still couldn't pronounce my name—[*laughter*—a lot of people were still convinced there was no chance that a guy named Barack Hussein Obama could even win a caucus, much less the Presidency.

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No, no, no, no—you guys know this. Some of you all didn't think I was going to win. [*Laughter*] Now—everybody says now, "Oh, I knew it all the time."

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No, uh-uh. Right before Iowa—I'm not talking about after Iowa, I'm talking about before Iowa, some of you all—see, they're all high-fiving over there. Yeah, girlfriend, I saw you. [*Laughter*]

There were a bunch of people who didn't think in that last week we were going to win. When Tim Kaine was running, there were a lot of folks who said, "Well, you know, I don't know, some of his policies are too liberal, and he's too principled. And I'm not sure that he can win in the State of Virginia." Do you remember a week before Tim Kaine—I was out here campaigning for Tim Kaine. A whole bunch of folks said, "I'm not sure he can do it." So now here we are a week away.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. I'm going to get to that. Hold on a second. [*Laughter*] So now we're a week from Tim Kaine—a week from Creigh Deeds's election, and a lot of people are saying, "Oh, you know, the polls don't look the way we want them to, and I'm not sure it's going to happen," and folks are just kind of staying home.

Listen, let me tell you something. I don't believe in "can't." I don't believe in giving up. I don't believe that we would turn our back on the progress that Tim Kaine has made here in Virginia. I am absolutely confident that we can, if you are willing to work in this last week. If you're willing to make your voice heard in this last week, if you're willing to knock on some doors in this last week and go and talk to your friends and your neighbors and your relatives; go out and get your cousin, who you had to drag to the polls last November, cousin Pookie. [*Laughter*] You go out and get him, and you tell him, you got to vote again this time.

If you work hard—because I know Creigh is going to work hard—then I promise you this: Not only are we going to elect an outstanding Lieutenant Governor and an outstanding attorney general, but we are going to continue the outstanding legacy in this great

Commonwealth, and you're going to be looking at the next Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Creigh Deeds.

Thank you, everybody. Let's get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:11 p.m. at Old Dominion University. In his remarks, he referred to John R. Brocerick, president, Old Dominion University; Secretary of Finance Jody C. Wagner and State Delegate Stephen C. Shannon of Virginia.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Gubernatorial candidate R. Creigh Deeds, rally in Norfolk, VA.

Locations: Norfolk, VA.

Names: Alexander, Kenneth C.; Brocerick, John R.; Deeds, R. Creigh; Fraim, Paul D.; Jones, Dwight C.; Kaine, Timothy M.; Miller, Yvonne B.; Obama, Michelle; Scott, Robert C.; Shannon, Stephen C.; Wagner, Jody M.; Wagner, Jody W.; Warner, Mark R.

Subjects: Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Foreign sources; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Insurance coverage and access to providers; Virginia : Democratic Party events; Virginia : Former Governor; Virginia : Governor; Virginia : President's visits.

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